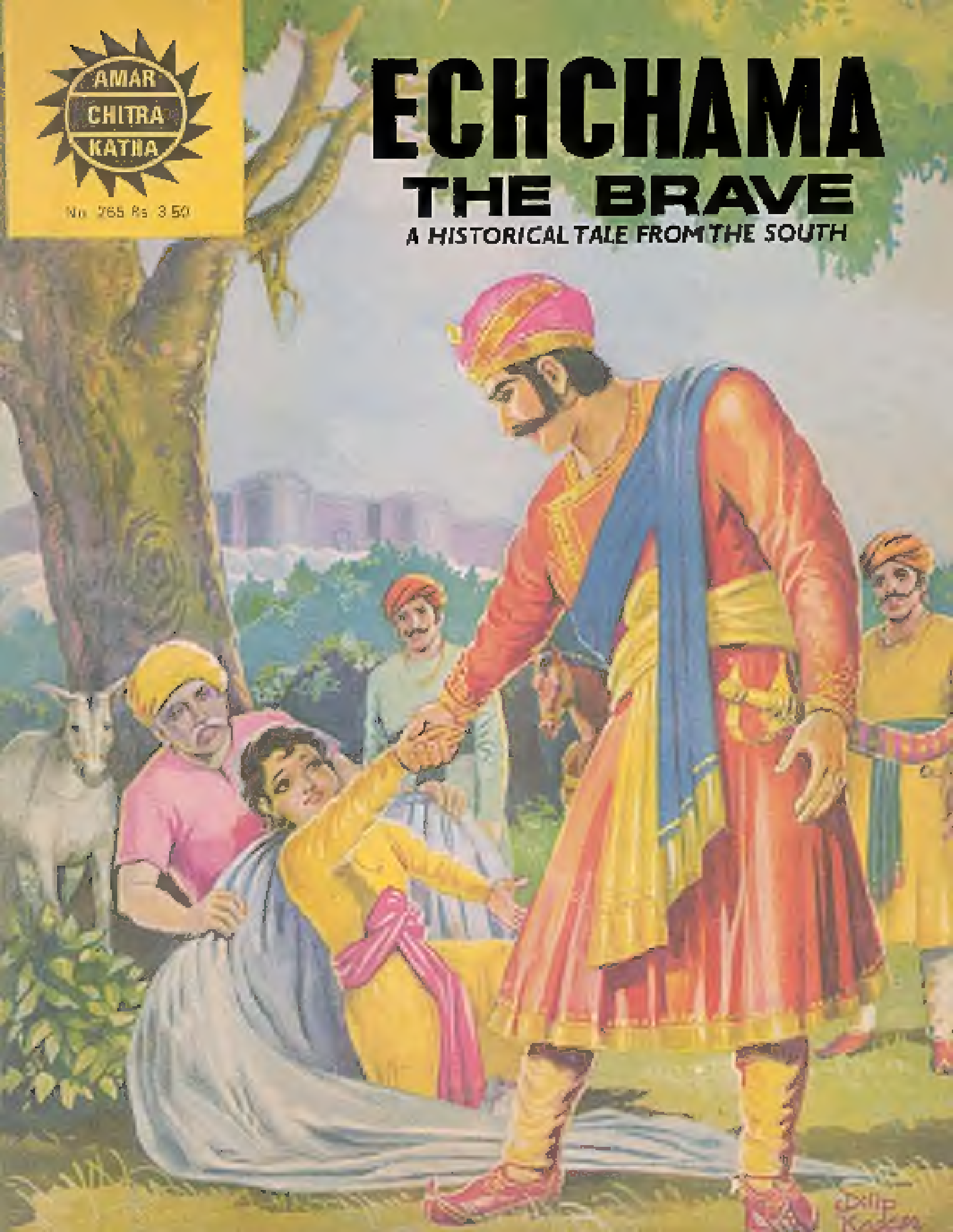




No. 265 Rs. 3.50

ECHCHAMA THE BRAVE

A HISTORICAL TALE FROM THE SOUTH



Dilip Kadam

The Vijayanagara Empire disintegrated following the defeat inflicted on its ruler by the combined forces of the Deccani Sultanates in the battle of Talikota (1565). Aliya Ramaraya, the powerful regent, lost his life in the battle. Hampi, the capital, was reduced to ruins. People were highly demoralised.

An attempt was made to revive the Kingdom and recapture its lost glory by the Aravidu dynasty which ruled from Chandragiri, near Tirupati. Venkatapati was the ablest of the rulers belonging to this dynasty. After him there was a struggle for the throne. In the events that followed, Echchama Nayak came off with flying colours.

Literary works like *Ramarajiyamu*, *Bahulashva Charitamu*, *Raghunathabhyudaya* and *Sahitya Ratnakara* bestow lavish praise on Echchama for his bravery and fearlessness and his loyalty to his master. Echchama is also known by the names, Pedda Yachama and Yachama Shuradu. His capital was Madhurantakam, near Chingleput in Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka Echchama's name has become a byword for loyalty.

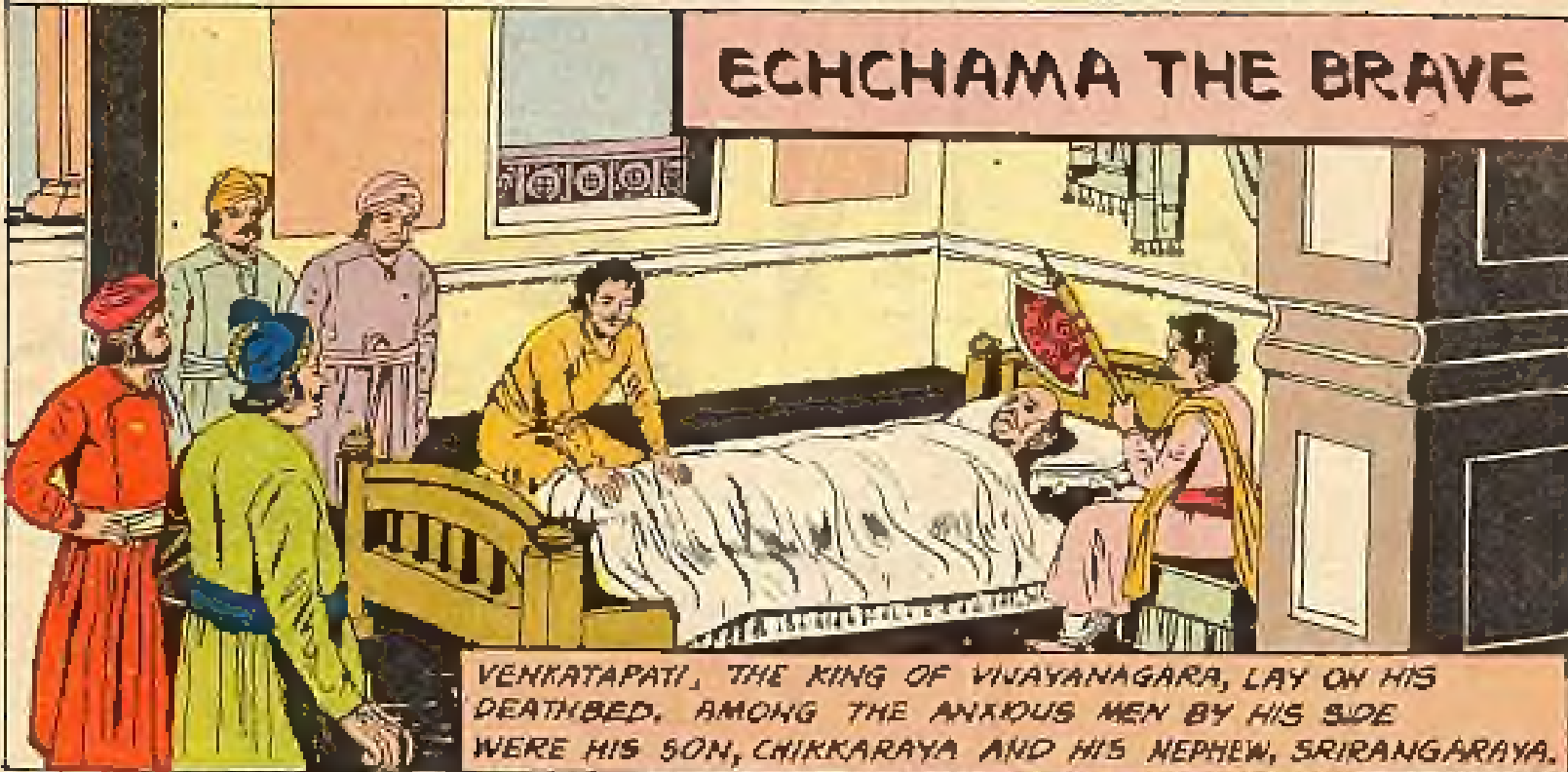
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ECHCHAMA THE BRAVE



VENKATAPATI, THE KING OF VINAYANAGARA, LAY ON HIS DEATHBED. AMONG THE ANXIOUS MEN BY HIS SIDE WERE HIS SON, CHIKKARAYA AND HIS NEPHEW, SRIRANGARAYA.



SUDDENLY, THE KING BECKONED TO SRIRANGARAYA TO COME CLOSER.



WHY IS HE REMOVING THE ROYAL RING?



MAHARAJ!
I...I AM NOT
THE ...

NO! NO!
I CANNOT ACCEPT
THE THRONE!



STEADY, PRINCE. THE KING
HAS APPOINTED YOU HIS
SUCCESSOR. AND THE KING'S
WISHES ARE ORDERS TO BE
OBEYED.



AT A SIGNAL FROM THE KING, THE
MINISTER PUT THE ROYAL CROWN
ON SRIRANGA'S HEAD.



ONE BY ONE, THE NOBLES AND THE CHIEFTAINS WALKED UP TO THE NEW KING AND
PLEGGED THEIR LOYALTY TO HIM. PROMINENT AMONG THEM WAS ECHHAMA NAYAK,
THE POWERFUL CHIEFTAIN OF MADHURANTAKAM.



THE ONLY NOBLE WHO HELD BACK WAS JAGGARAYA, THE BROTHER-IN-LAW OF THE DYING KING.



THE THRONE BELONGS TO YOU, CHIKKA!



AND I'LL SEE TO IT THAT YOU OCCUPY IT.

LATER, WHEN THE CHIEFTAINS WERE ALONE —




EVERYONE IS SURPRISED BY THE KING'S CHOICE!

AND WELL MIGHT THEY BE!




WHY DID HE DENY HIS OWN SON THE THRONE?

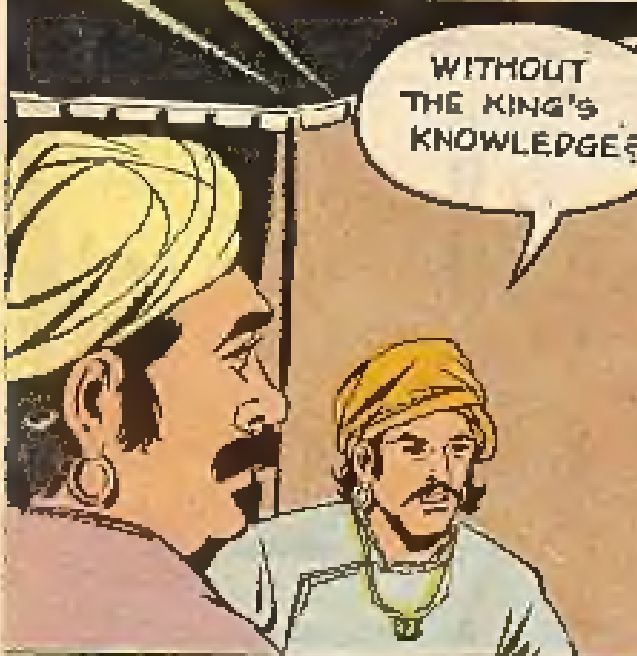
WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE THAT CHIKKA IS HIS SON?




FOR YEARS, I'VE
HEARD IT SAID THAT
CHIKKA IS AN
ADOPTED CHILD...




...ADOPTED BY
THE QUEEN, THAT
IS. THEY SAY IT
WAS DONE WHEN
HE WAS AN
INFANT.



WITHOUT
THE KING'S
KNOWLEDGE?

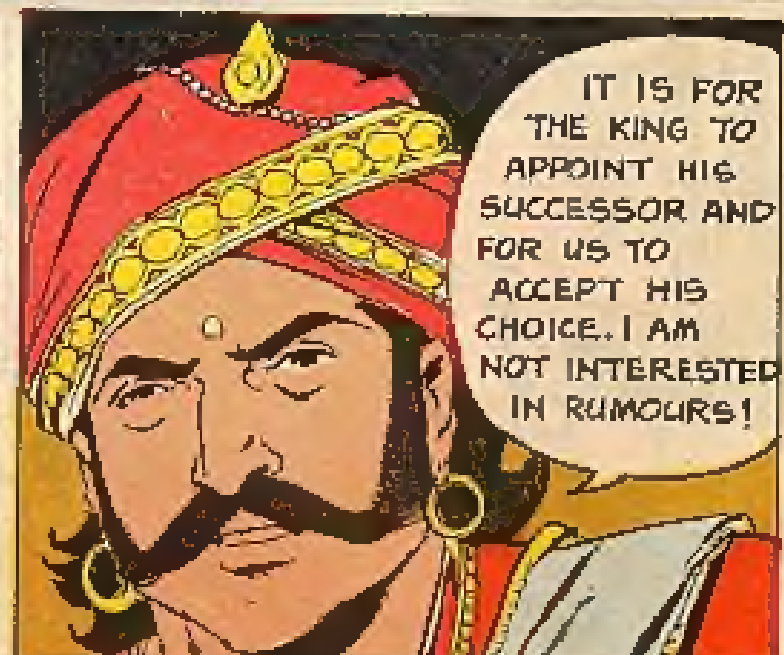


APPARENTLY
THE KING DID
KNOW OR WHY
ELSE...



YOU ARE SILENT,
ECHGHAMA.

WHAT CAN
I SAY?



IT IS FOR
THE KING TO
APPOINT HIS
SUCCESSOR AND
FOR US TO
ACCEPT HIS
CHOICE. I AM
NOT INTERESTED
IN RUMOURS!

SOON, THE OLD KING DIED AND SRIRANGA RELUCTANTLY BEGAN HIS REIGN.



JAGGARAYA HAS NOT PLEDGED HIS LOYALTY TO YOU.



AND NOW HE'S INCITING THE OTHER CHIEFTAINS TO REVOLT. TWO OF THEM HAVE ALREADY JOINED HIM.



YOU MUST PUT DOWN THE REVOLT BEFORE IT GROWS, MAHARAJ!

SRIRANGA CONFISCATED JAGGARAYA'S LANDS AND THOSE OF THE OTHER TWO CHIEFTAINS.

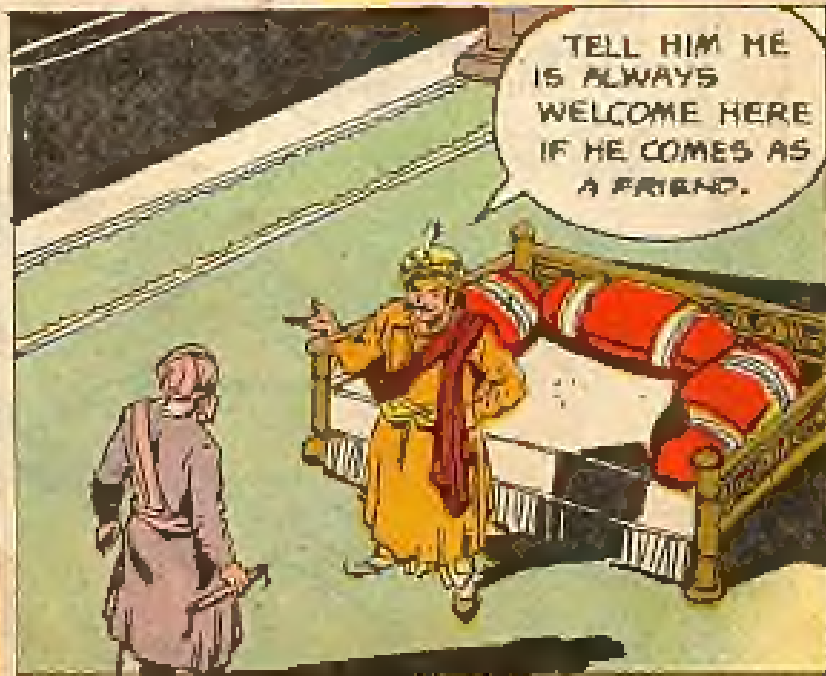
SOME DAYS LATER, HE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM JAGGARAYA.



HE CRAVES YOUR PARDON AND BEGS YOU TO ALLOW HIM AND HIS FRIENDS TO COME AND PAY THEIR RESPECTS TO YOU.



WE HAVE FRIGHTENED HIM. IT APPEARS!



TELL HIM HE IS ALWAYS WELCOME HERE IF HE COMES AS A FRIEND.

SOME DAYS LATER JAGGARAYA
CAME WITH A FEW OF HIS MEN.



ALL OF THEM DREW THEIR SWORDS AND
KNELT BEFORE THE KING IN THE
TRADITIONAL SHOW OF RESPECT.



THEN —

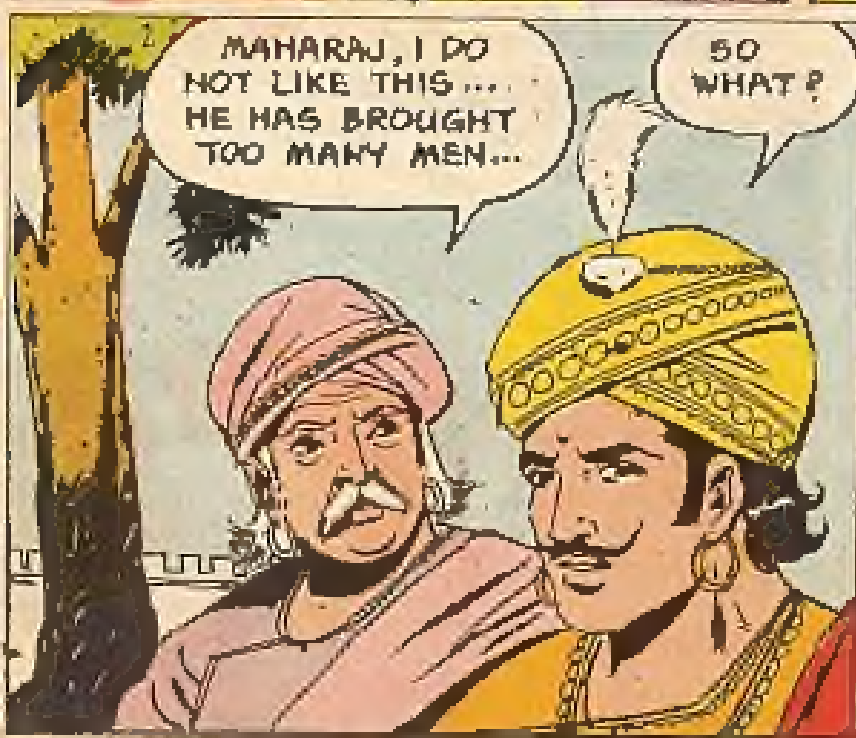
MORE OF MY MEN
ARE WAITING OUT-
SIDE. THEY TOO
WOULD LIKE TO
PLEDGE THEIR
ALLEGIANCE
TO YOU!

LET THEM
COME IN.



MAHARAJ, I DO
NOT LIKE THIS ...
HE HAS BROUGHT
TOO MANY MEN...

SO
WHAT?

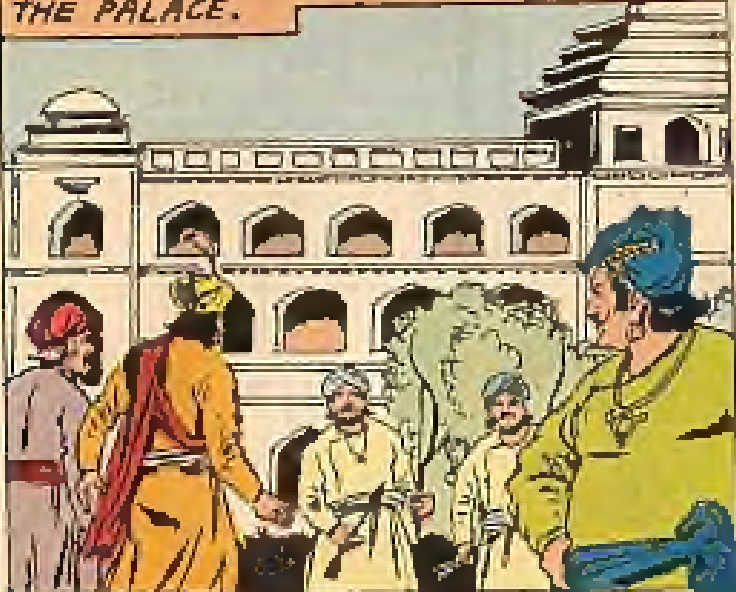


PLEASE TAKE MY
ADVICE AND GET INTO
THE PALACE!

I... OH,
ALL
RIGHT.



SRIRANGA TRIED TO GO BACK INTO THE PALACE.



BUT—



STAY WHERE YOU ARE IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE.


SRIRANGA WAS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED.




ALONG WITH HIS WIFE AND HIS THREE SONS HE WAS TAKEN AWAY AND IMPRISONED IN ANOTHER PALACE.




JAGGARAYA CROWNED HIS NEPHEW KING BUT
REMAINED THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE.




ALL THE
CHIEFTAINS HAVE
ACCEPTED THE
NEW KING...



... ALL
EXCEPT
ECHCHAMA.



WHAT DOES
THAT MAN
WANT? MORE
LAND?



WRITE TO
THE CHIEFTAIN ECHCHAMA
THAT IF HE COMES HERE TO
CHANDRAGIRI AS LIEGEMAN
TO THE NEW KING, I WILL
GIVE HIM MORE TERRITORY
TO RULE OVER.

THE LETTER WAS SENT BUT ECHCHAMA
DID NOT RESPOND

I CAN'T
UNDERSTAND
WHY HE IS
SO STUBBORN!

IT IS TRUE
THAT HE TOOK
AN OATH OF
ALLEGANCE TO
SKIRANGA BUT
SO DID WE
ALL!

I ONLY HOPE
HE DOES NOT
ATTACK US

HE WON!

HE WILL
NOT RISK
IT AS LONG
AS WE HOLD
SR RANGA

THE BEST THING
TO DO IS TO IGNORE
HIM FOR THE TIME
BEING

MEANWHILE AT MADHURANTAKAM ECHCHAND AND HIS TRUSTED LIEUTENANT OBALA NAYAK WERE PLANNING THE NEXT MOVE

I WISH I HAD BEEN IN CHANDRAGR. WHEN THAT TREACHEROUS JAGGA ABDUCTED THE KING.

MY YOUNG MASTER IS SO GUILTESS I'LL WAGER HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING TILL THE LAST MOMENT

JAGGA WILL PAY DEARLY FOR HIS TREACHERY

OUR MEN ARE READY FOR BATTLE

A WORD FROM YOU AND

WE MUST HAVE PATIENCE OUR KING'S LIFE WILL BE IN DANGER IF WE DECLARE WAR ON JAGGA

FIRST WE MUST RESCUE THE KING AND THEN PUNISH THE TRAITORS

HOW DO WE DO THAT?



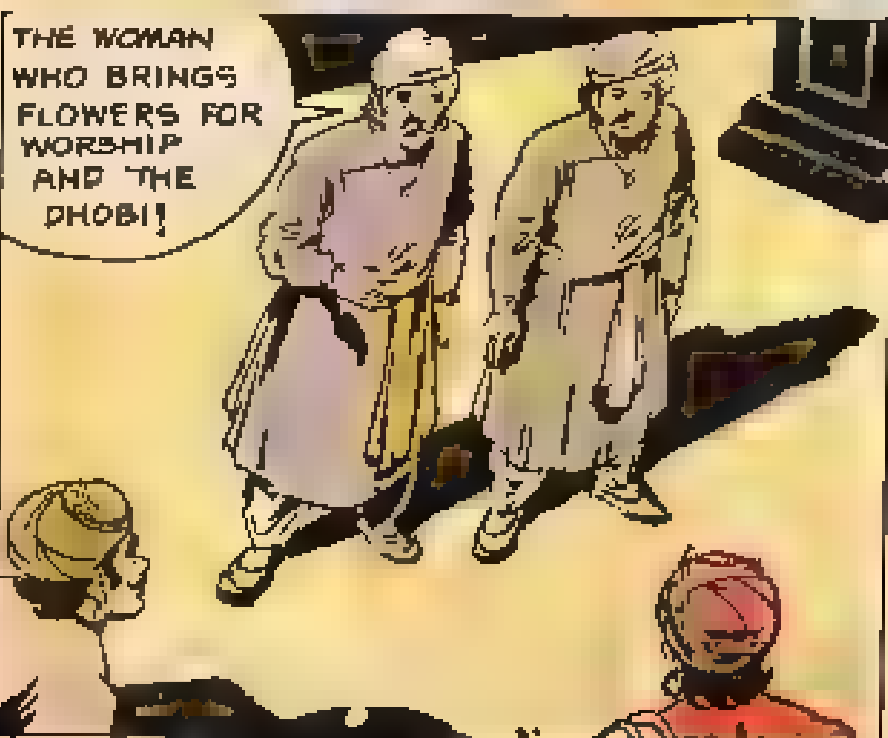
HERE COME
THE SPIES I HAD
SENT TO CHANDRAGIRI
PERHAPS, THEY CAN
ANSWER YOUR
QUESTION



THE PALACE
IS HEAVILY
GUARDED. NO
ONE CAN
ENTER OR
LEAVE WITH-
OUT BEING
SEEN



ONLY TWO PEOPLE
GO IN AND OUT WITHOUT
BEING QUESTIONED.



THE WOMAN
WHO BRINGS
FLOWERS FOR
WORSHIP
AND THE
DHABI!

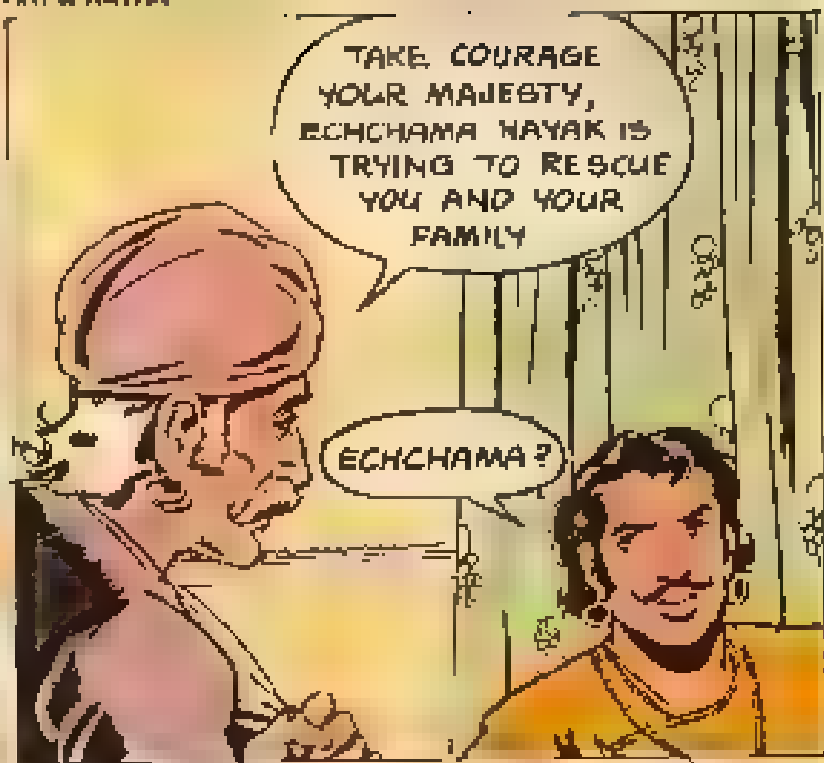


I WOULD LIKE
TO SPEAK TO
THE DHABI

SOME DAYS LATER AT THE PALACE
WHERE SRIRANGA WAS HELD PRISONER-



YOUR MAJESTY,
I HAVE COME TO
COLLECT THE
SOILED LINEN



TAKE COURAGE
YOUR MAJESTY,
ECHCHAMA NAYAK IS
TRYING TO RESCUE
YOU AND YOUR
FAMILY

ECHCHAMA?



YES, YOUR
MAJESTY. IN THE
MEANT ME HE HAS
ASKED ME TO SMUGGLE
ONE OF THE PRINCES
OUT



ECHCHAMA'S
LOYALTY IS
LAUDABLE.
BUT..



.. YOUR TASK
IS A HOPELESS
ONE-HOW WILL
YOU HOODWINK
ALL THOSE KEEN
GUARDS OUT-
SIDE?

TRUST ME,
MAHARAJ

THE ELDEST
IS TOO BIG FOR
ME TO CARRY

BUT
I CAN TAKE
THE SECOND
ONE

A LITTLE LATER —

YOU HAVE
A HEAVY
LOAD TODAY

ER
YES

THE WAY HE IS
TOTTERING ONE
WOULD THINK HE
WAS CARRYING
ROCKS

POOR FELLOW!
HE IS GETTING
TOO OLD FOR
THE JOB

HERE, LET ME
HELP YOU.

SOME TIME AFTER THE DHOBI HAD LEFT THE FORT —



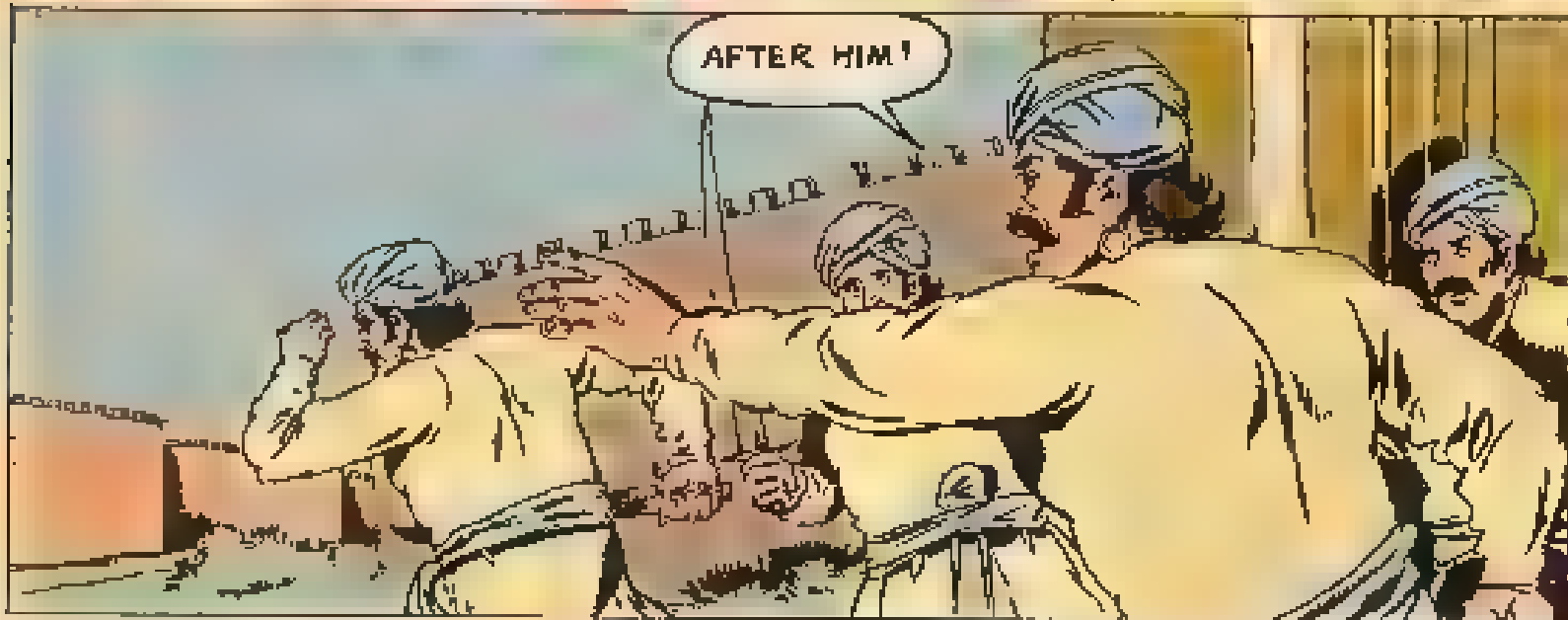
ONE OF THE PRINCES IS MISSING!

HE IS NOT IN THE PALACE!

THE DHOBI! HE MUST HAVE BEEN CARRYING THE PRINCE!

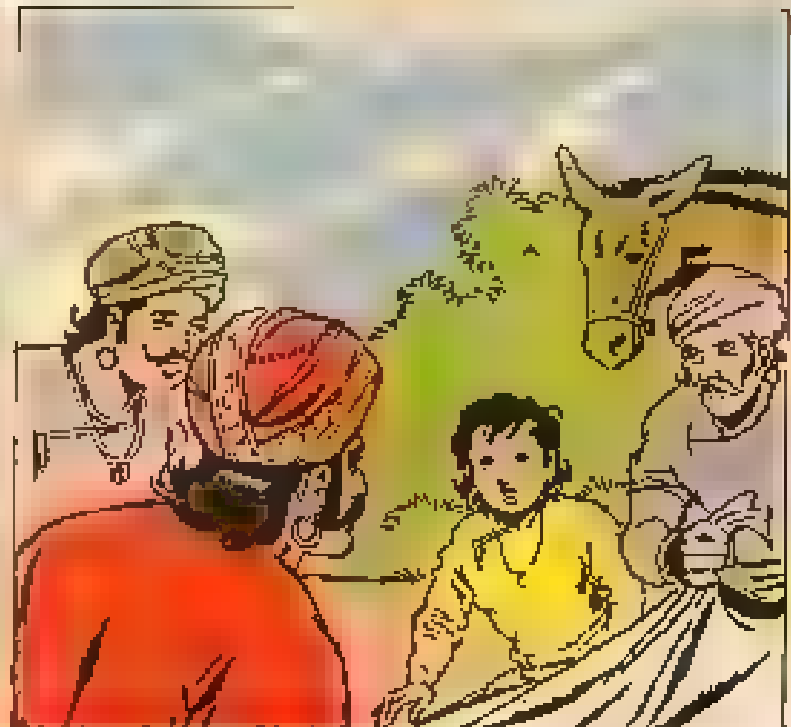
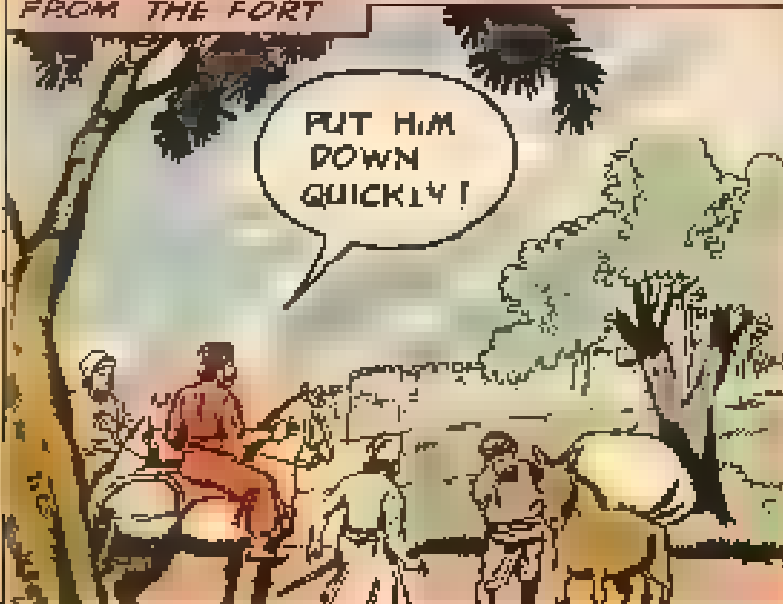


AFTER HIM!



BUT THE DHOBI HAD ALREADY REACHED HIS DESTINATION. ELCHAMA WAS WAITING FOR HIM SOME DISTANCE AWAY FROM THE FORT

PUT HIM DOWN QUICKLY!





THAT'S A JOB
WELL DONE. I AM
GRATEFUL TO YOU
NOW KEEP OUT
OF JAGGA'S WAY



LET'S GO!

ECHOMAMA TOOK THE PRINCE
TO MADHURANTAKAM.



WHEN JAGGARAYA WAS INFORMED OF
THE PRINCE'S ESCAPE, HE WAS FURIOUS

DOLTS'
MSECILEGI
FOOLED BY
A SIMPLE
DHOBII

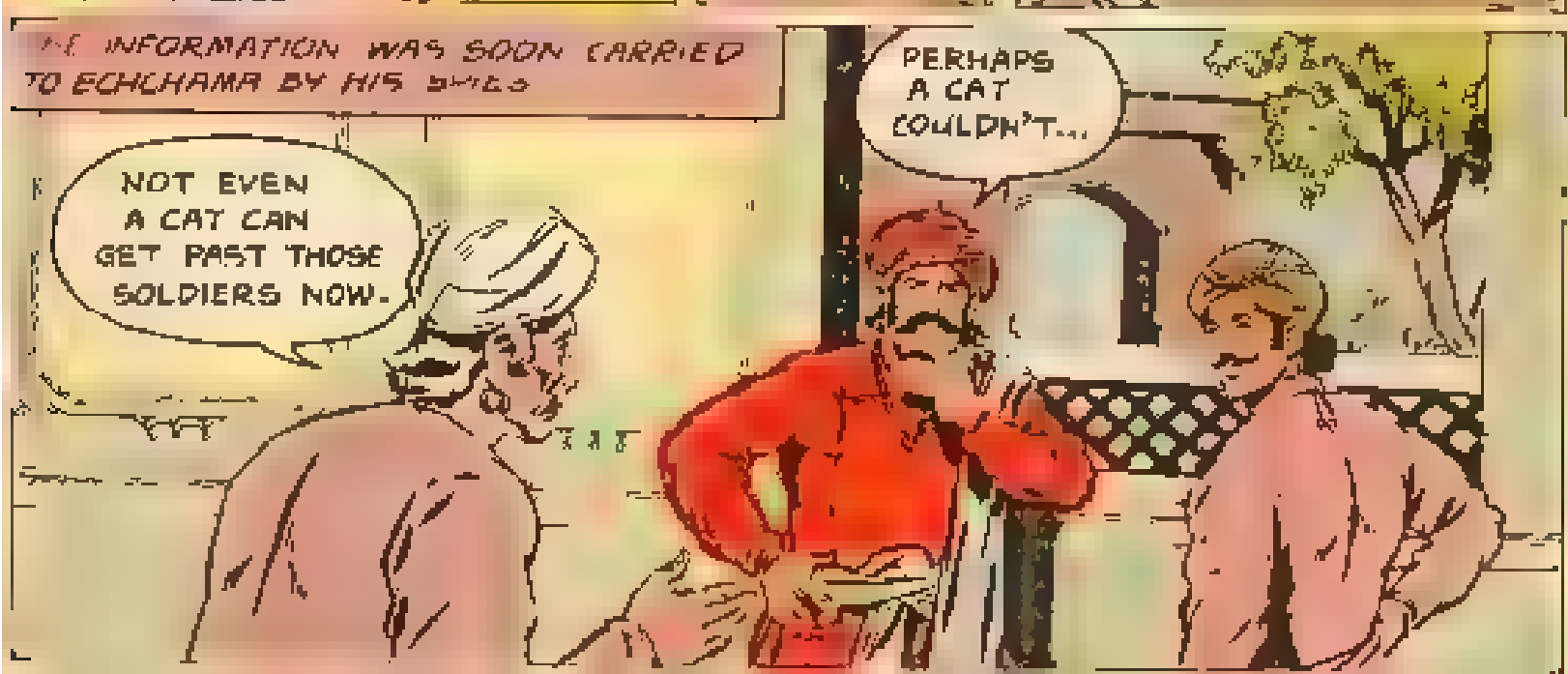


WHY DIDN'T
YOU GO
AFTER HIM?

HE WAS TOO
QUICK FOR US



THEN I MAY
AS WELL HAVE
DHOBIS WORKING
FOR ME!





A SCORE OF MEN BEGAN TO DIG SOME DISTANCE AWAY FROM THE PALACE...



AND SLOWLY BUT STEADILY BEGAN TO BURROW THEIR WAY UNDER THE GROUND



THEN ONE DAY —



WHAT CHANCE DO YOU HAVE?

WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?

ECHCHAMA NAYAK
HAS SENT US TO TAKE
YOU AND YOUR
FAMILY AWAY FROM
HERE.

WE HAVE DUG A
TUNNEL TO TAKE
YOU OUT

A TUNNEL?
IT'S A HAZARDOUS
SCHEME!

THE GUARDS HERE
ARE VERY ALERT.
ANYWAY, I'LL WAKE UP
THE QUEEN AND
THE PRINCES.

SRIRANGA HIS WIFE AND HIS TWO
SONS DESCENDED INTO THE
TUNNEL ONE BY ONE

OUTSIDE, THE SOLDIERS WERE
PATROLLING THE GROUNDS



SUDDENLY

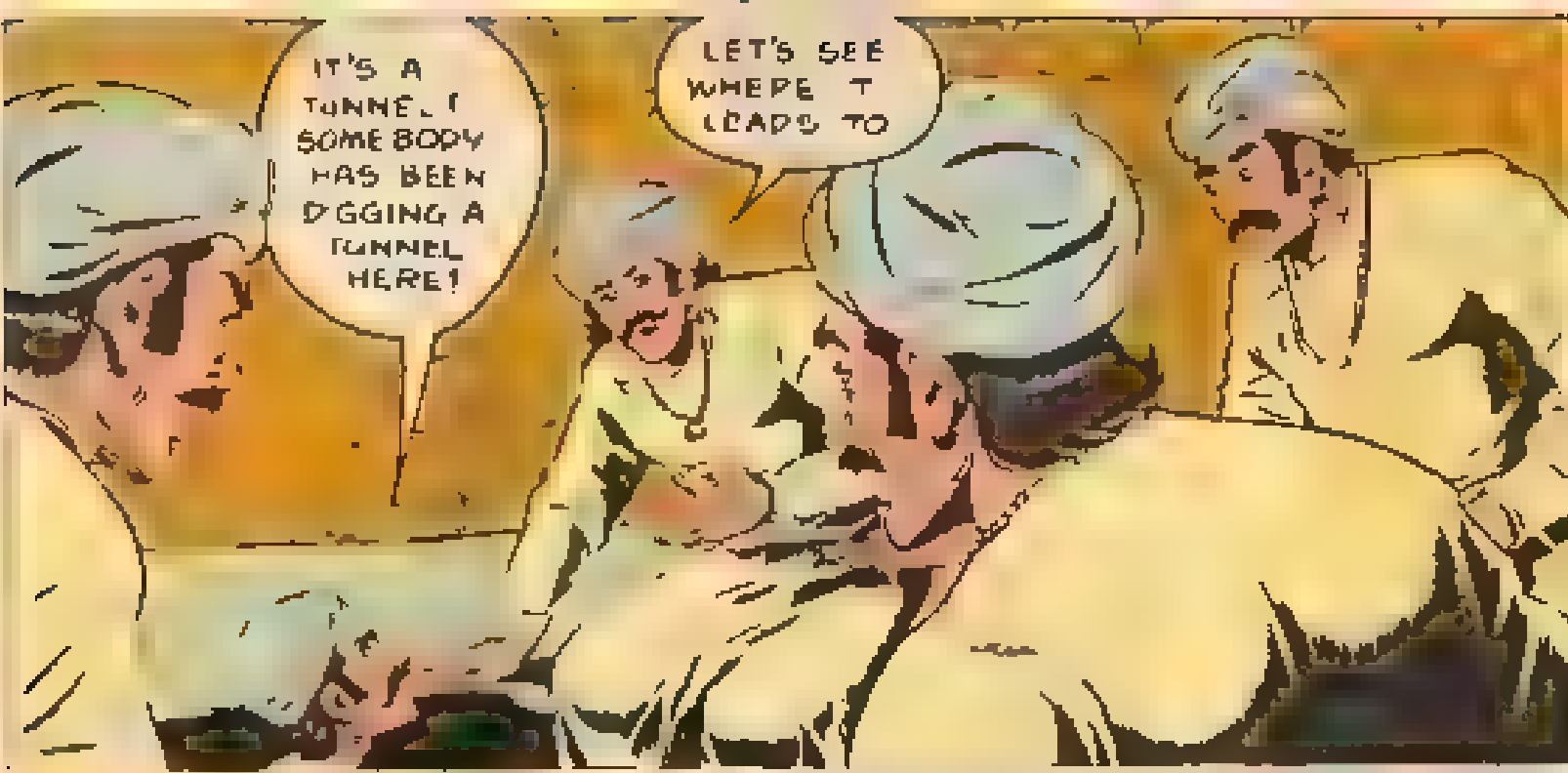


WHAT
HAPPENED?



THE GROUND
SUDDENLY
CAVED IN
UNDER HIM





ONLY ONE MAN WHO WAS FAR AHEAD
OF THE OTHERS MANAGED TO ESCAPE

THEY DISCOVERED
THE TUNNEL!
THEY WILL SOON
BE HERE!

LET'S
GET OUT
OF HERE!

SHAKEN BY THE DARING PLANS OF ECHCHAMA
NAYAK, JAGGARAYA TRANSFERRED THE
PRISONERS TO ANOTHER PRISON IN THE FORT

THESE WALLS
ARE IMPREGNABLE

NO ONE CAN DIG
A TUNNEL THROUGH
THIS ROCKY GROUND

BUT IT DID NOT TAKE THE FAITHFUL
ECHCHAMA LONG TO DISCOVER WHERE
HIS MASTER WAS IMPRISONED

WE'LL CAPTURE
THAT PLACE

HOW?

WE'LL NEED
THOUSANDS
OF MEN FOR
THE TASK

NOT IF WE
DO IT MY WAY
LISTEN...

ELCHAMAS MEN BEGAN TO INFILTRATE THE
FORT IN THE GUISE OF PEASANTS AND
TRADERS



OBALA NAYAK TOO ENTERED THE FORTRESS

AND WENT INTO HIDING LIKE THE REST
OF HIS MEN. THEN ONE EVENING —

JAGGARAYA
IS GOING OUT
TOMORROW
TO MEET A
CAPTAIN

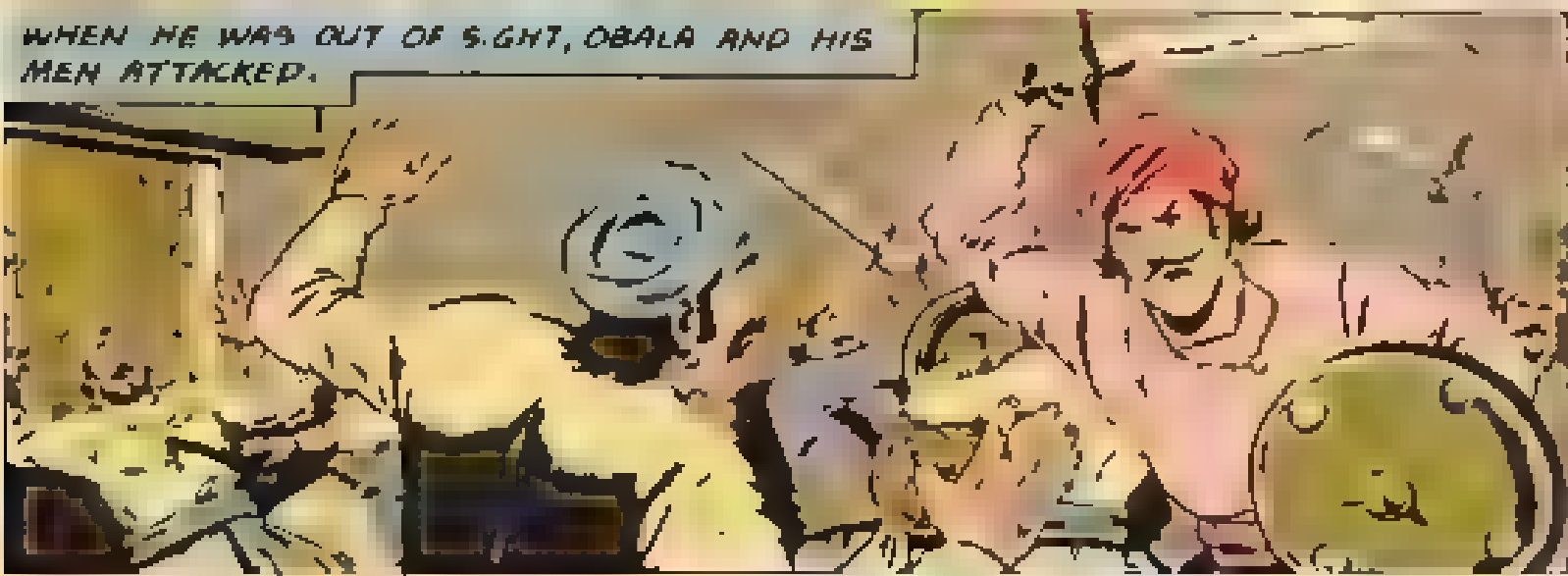
HE'LL BE
TAKING SOME
OF HIS MEN
WITH HIM IT'S
THE RIGHT TIME
FOR US TO
STRIKE.

PASS THE
WORD AROUND.
LET OUR MEN
BE READY

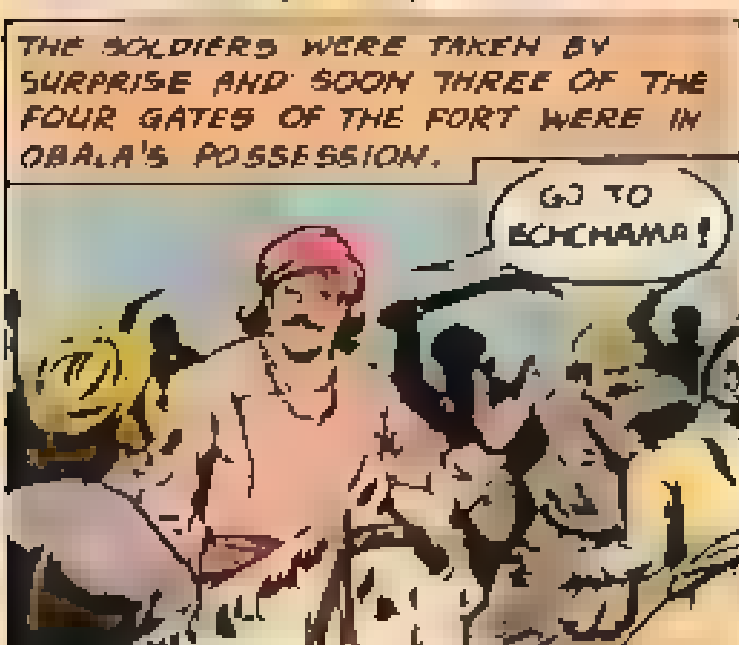
THE NEXT MORNING JAGGARAYA LEFT WITH ALMOST HALF OF THE MEN IN THE FORT.



WHEN HE WAS OUT OF SIGHT, OBALA AND HIS MEN ATTACKED.



THE SOLDIERS WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND SOON THREE OF THE FOUR GATES OF THE FORT WERE IN OBALA'S POSSESSION.



TELL HIM TO COME QUICKLY WITH THE REST OF OUR ARMY!



AS THE MESSENGER RODE AWAY

ANOTHER MESSENGER WAS ON HIS
WAY TO JAGGARAYA



ONE OF OUR MEN
FROM THE FORT
IS TRYING TO
CATCH UP WITH
US!

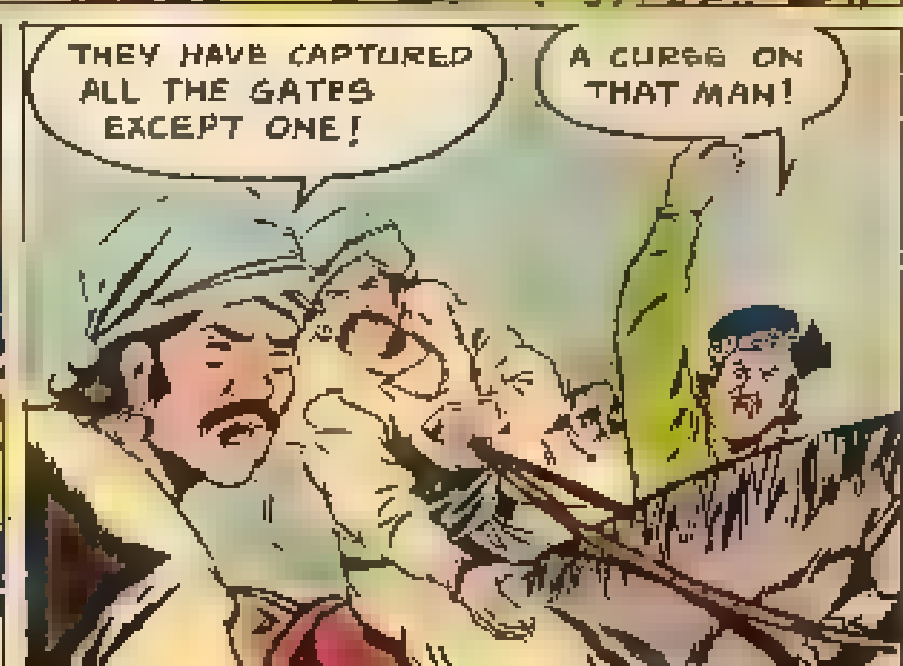


ECHCHAMA'S
MEN ARE IN
THE FORT!



THEY HAVE CAPTURED
ALL THE GATES
EXCEPT ONE!

A CURSE ON
THAT MAN!



BACK TO
THE FORT!



OBALA AND HIS MEN, JUBILANT WITH
THEIR SUCCESS WERE WAITING FOR
ECHCHAMA TO COME WHEN THEY SAW
A CLOUD IN THE DISTANCE —



HERE COMES
ECHCHAMA
NAYAK!

BUT THEY WERE IN
FOR A SURPRISE



IT'S
JAGGA!



ATTACK!



OBALA AND HIS MEN FOUGHT BRAVELY
BUT THEY WERE OUTHUMBERED AND
SOON ALL OF THEM WERE DEAD

WHEN ECHCHAMA ARRIVED AT THE FORT ALL THE GATES WERE CLOSED..



AND HE HAD TO WITHDRAW.



HOWEVER, ECHCHAMA'S BRAVE ATTEMPT HAD SHAKEN JAGGARAYA'S MEN INCLUDING HIS OWN BROTHER.



ECHCHAMA WILL NEVER GIVE UP HIS EFFORTS TO RESCUE SR RANGA

ONLY AS LONG AS SRIRANGA IS ALIVE.

YOU MEAN P



YES WE'LL PUT HIM OUT OF THE WAY! FOR EVER! AND YOU WILL DO IT



THAT NIGHT JAGGARAYA'S BROTHER
VISITED THE PRISON

YOUR ATTEMPT
TO ESCAPE IS
A CRIME.

FIRST YOU LET
YOUR SON ESCAPE
BUT WE LET
THAT PASS.

THEN YOU TRIED
TO ESCAPE WITH
YOUR WHOLE
FAMILY.

HAVE NO
DEFENCE
TO OFFER.

I AM NOT
AFRAID OF
YOUR
PUNISHMENTS

IT'S
NOT ONLY
YOURSELF.

YOUR WHOLE
FAMILY STANDS
CONDEMNED

THEN I HAVE ONLY ONE
REQUEST TO MAKE
OF YOU.

LET MINE BE
THE HAND
THAT PUTS
MY FAMILY
TO SLEEP.



WITH HIS OWN HANDS SR RANGA TOOK THE LIVES OF HIS WIFE AND HIS TWO SONS AND THEN TURNED THE SWORD ON HIMSELF.

THE NEWS SHOCKED EVERYBODY INCLUDING SEVERAL CHIEFTAINS WHO WERE SUPPORTING JAGGARAYA



HE SHOULD NOT HAVE DONE THIS



AFTER ALL, SR RANGA WAS THE APPOINTED KING

THE MOST AFFECTED WAS ECHCHAMA.



THIS IS THE BLACKEST DAY IN MY LIFE



I HAVE FAILED MY MASTER!



YOU SHALL NOT ESCAPE MY WRATH, JAGGARAYA!



A TACKLED THE CAPITAL IN THE
BATTLE THAT FOLLOWED



JAGGARAYA AND HIS NEPHEW WERE DEFEATED THEY
WERE FORCED TO FLEE.*



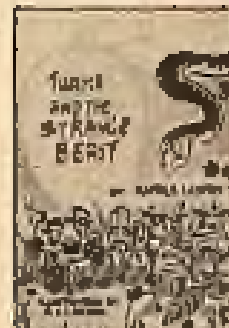
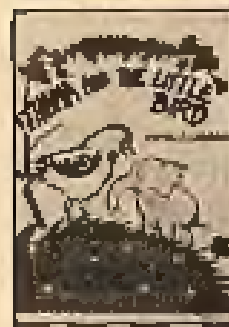
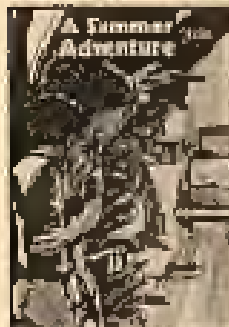
ECHCHAMA ENTERED THE CAPITAL AND
INSTALLED SRIRANGA'S TWELVE-
YEAR-OLD SON ON THE THRONE


THIS MUST BE THE PROUDEST
MOMENT IN ECHCHAMA'S LIFE.
FOR HE HAS MADE GOOD
HIS PLEDGE TO SRIRANGA
RAYA



LOYALTY, GREATER
THAN HIS, HAS NEVER
BEEN WITNESSED IN
THIS LAND

* JAGGARAYA WAS KILLED LATER IN ANOTHER BATTLE WITH ECHCHAMA NAYAK.

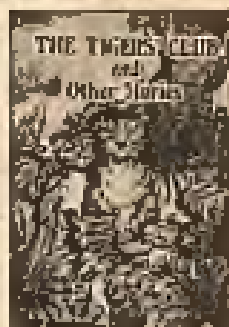




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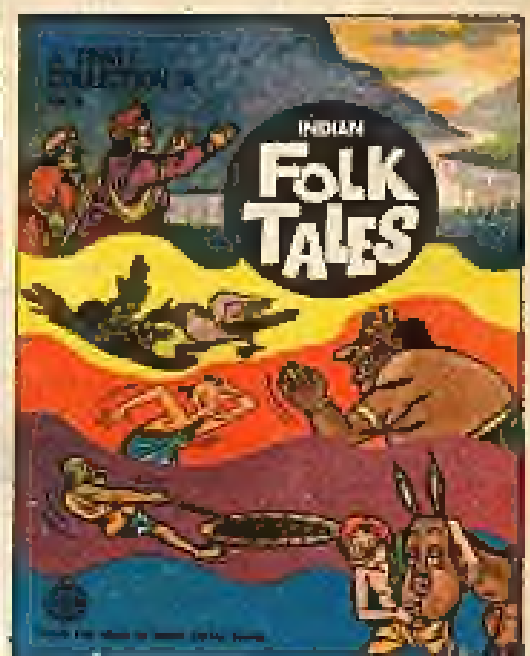
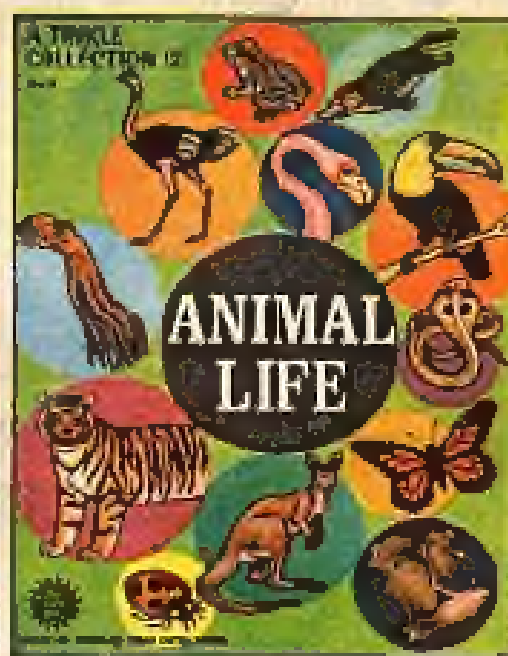
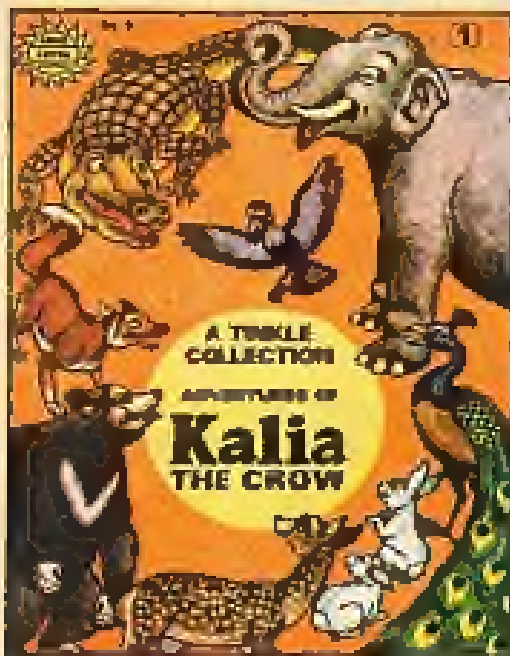
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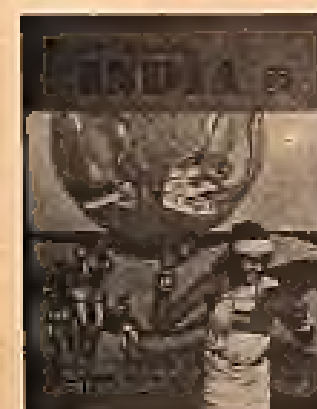


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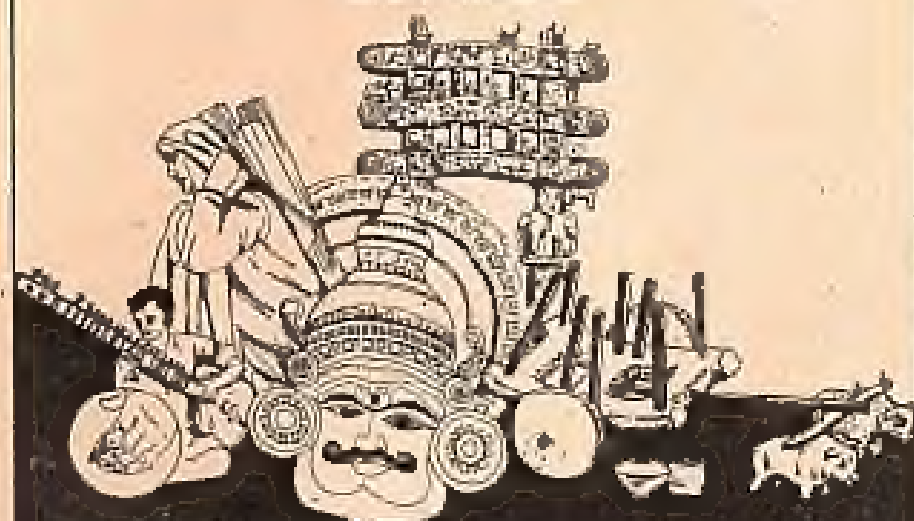
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